

Message

From: Shoren Brown [SBrown@tu.org]
Sent: 3/26/2013 4:15:13 PM
To: Hough, Palmer [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=51cd0b0d81ac416fa265944d6e6575ce-PHough]
Subject: fyi

BRISTOL BAY:

Vitter calls on EPA to scrap watershed assessment

Manuel Quinones, E&E reporter

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Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), the new ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, is asking U.S. EPA to scrap its ongoing watershed assessment of the potential impacts of large-scale mining on the Bristol Bay region of southwestern Alaska.

Vitter's letter is the latest in a string of missives, largely from congressional Republicans, asking EPA to justify its involvement in Pebble LP's potential gold and copper mine near sensitive salmon fisheries.

"Specifically, we are deeply troubled by EPA's unreasonable claim that it has 'preemptive veto authority' over the Pebble Mine Project before the sponsor has the opportunity to apply to the Army Corps of Engineers for a [Clean Water Act] permit," Vitter wrote along with Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.).

EPA has sought to justify its watershed assessment as a way of protecting the environment and responding to requests from local Native Americans. Fishermen and environmental groups are strongly supporting agency involvement.

While EPA has not indicated whether it will seek to block all or parts of the mine under Clean Water Act Section 404(c), the agency has defended its power to do so ([Greenwire](#), April 3, 2012).

Documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act show a redacted email with an attachment containing a draft outline for EPA to potentially "invoke 404(c)."

"Please ensure that this is not distributed," wrote EPA Region 10 official Richard Parkin. "At this time it is too vulnerable to misinterpretation and speculation."

Vitter and Wicker wrote, "If EPA continues on this unwieldy path, the agency is jeopardizing billions of dollars of investment and thousands of high-paying jobs, all without due process."

Republicans on the House science and oversight committees are also probing EPA's watershed assessment and involvement in the potential Pebble mine.

Earlier this month, EPA said it would release a new version of its watershed assessment in the coming months and reconvene a panel of scientists to perform additional peer review ([Greenwire](#), Feb. 6). The agency will also open another public comment period.

Like other panel leaders, Vitter is asking for information about the costs of the watershed assessment and details about the process.

[Click here](#) to read Vitter's letter.

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